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Mearry Jane T. Bojos, M.A.Ed.

mearrybojos@fcic.edu.ph

M.A.Ed. Major in Educational Management
Franciscan College of the Immaculate Conception
Baybay City, Leyte

Avelina C. Oclinaria, Ed.D.

Franciscan College of the Immaculate Conception
Baybay City, Leyte

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BRAVING THE STORM: A HERMENEUTIC PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY ON TEACHERS IN CLASS MANAGEMENT

Meary Jane T. Bojos, M.A.Ed.¹, Avelina C. Oclinaria, Ed.D.²

^{1,2}Franciscan College of the Immaculate Conception, Baybay City, Leyte



ABSTRACT

Teachers in managing their class has always something to recount about their positive and negative experiences that usually occurred in the classroom. These positive and negative experiences affected the holistic disposition of teachers thus, in every small group discussion – both formal and informal, their predicaments regarding their experiences on class management were the primary topic. For the teacher's experiences to be explored and understood this study focused primarily on their experiences in managing class. For this reason, this hermeneutic phenomenological qualitative study focuses on the experiences of the teachers and reflects upon the lived experiences of teachers in class management. This study utilized criterion sampling where ten participants were selected from the teachers of Grade 7 to Grade 10. Data were collected by means of Structured Interviews, and Interpretative Phenomenology Analysis was used to analyze the data. The results of the study show that teachers have been subjected to a number of problems, which result in them losing their patience, especially with students' behavior. However, teachers recognized their role in the classroom and provided insightful strategies for combatting the problematic behavior of the students. Considering the management strategy and the personality of the teacher, they were able to realize that even if teaching is a tedious and arduous profession, teachers were still grateful because of the inspiration imparted, happy memories collected, and self-development gained from a fruitful experience in class management. Therefore, teachers whose roles and responsibilities are not limited only to the four walls of the classrooms but it goes beyond their jurisdiction must be given appropriate recognition and compensation.

Keywords: *Class Management, Teachers Lived Experiences, Hermeneutic Phenomenological*

INTRODUCTION

Teaching is more difficult than ever in the contemporary age. Each teacher in a classroom, therefore, has her unique technique for leading her class. The most widely used term for what we referred to as managing the classroom while teaching takes the forms of "classroom management," "classroom control," and "classroom discipline". The various techniques teachers employ every day to create a pleasant learning environment in the classroom that is structured, engaging, and productive and promotes student learning and progress are encapsulated in classroom management practices. Furthermore, according to Burden and Yousif and Salim, effective classroom management requires teachers to use their actions, instructional strategies, and efforts to foster motivation, active learning engagement, and healthy social connection.



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In light of this, the teacher, who is the person who has authority in the classroom, is exclusively responsible for supervising the students. Therefore, in the context of effective learning management has been specifically accorded a focus on compliance which includes some rules and strategies teachers can apply to make sure students are seated at their desks, following instructions, listening intently, etc. All the activities that teachers might be capable of facilitating or developing learning for students are also covered by a more comprehensive and contemporary interpretation of classroom management. It would include elements like behavior—having a positive outlook, radiantly making encouraging statements, treating students with respect and honesty, etc.—and the environment—having a warm, well-lit classroom full of intellectually stimulating learning materials that are set up to support particular learning activities. Additionally, expectations include the caliber of work that teachers hope their students will produce, the conduct that teachers anticipate their students will exhibit toward other students or the agreements that teachers communicate with students.

However, it is quite difficult for teachers to keep the class under control, particularly if it includes a varied group of students. Even while the majority of students can follow directions, there will occasionally be one who has trouble acting appropriately. Better teaching and learning may be hampered by these classroom incidents. Teachers spend a lot of time and energy trying to get everyone back on track rather than sticking to the planned lesson. Otherwise, the interruptions would worsen quickly, and teachers will have to put in a lot of effort to prevent teaching failure when they are unable to control the disturbance as specified in the expectation. It is exhausting and the learning environment is jeopardized.

Moreover, according to Brashear some of these learners exhibit aberrant behavior in class beyond the control of the teacher. Various aspects of the student's future behavior, as well as their general well-being and chances of future success, are significantly influenced by the context from which problematic behavior emerges and the way teachers interact with students exhibiting such behavior. Along with having an impact on problematic conduct, it has a significant negative impact on teachers' general well-being. He further added that teachers managing these behaviors and a lack of tools and support are the main causes of burnout, stress, and attrition.

Added to this, research indicates that a lot of teachers are unprepared for the behaviors that their pupils can bring to the classroom, which presents difficulties for both teaching and learning. According to Albright et al., inexperienced teachers lacked the classroom management techniques and abilities necessary to flourish in an urban school environment. In this sense, teachers are hesitant to apply classroom tactics to address the needs of the classroom because they lack information about managing their class. Teachers purely rely on trial and error in the strategies they employed on managing the class which they think will work based on their experiences.

To that end, I explored the experiences of the teachers in class management. With the rise of numerous restrictions on disciplining students, the experiences shared may help superiors in thinking of any ways they can assist classroom teachers in reducing the storm they are battling with.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study utilized a qualitative hermeneutic phenomenological research design to interpret and give meaning to the lived experiences of teachers in managing classes. The sample size of this study was ten participants selected from Grade 7 to Grade 10. Criterion sampling was utilized in this study to ensure that each participant involved shared their experiences regarding the phenomenon of class management. Each research participant had met the following inclusion criteria: a classroom teacher of New Ormoc City National High School, has gained a rating of at least level 6 in the 2 Classroom



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Observation Tool (COT) under indicator number 5: "Maintain learning environment that promotes fairness, respect and care to encourage learning", and being able and willing to participate in the study. I included the COT in the criteria to justify or to have concrete evidence regarding the positive approach utilized by the teacher in managing the behavior of the students.

Moreover, the data was analyzed using van Manen's six-step interpretive phenomenological approach as cited by Normann [10] which includes: first, focusing on the nature of lived experience. I focused my study on the experiences of teachers in managing class through the formulated research questions that brought participants to share their experiences because notably teachers were bombarded with experiences on handling students and based on these experiences, teachers gained knowledge on how to properly handle students. Second, exploring experience as we live it. By using the face-to-face interview, I was able to gather those experiences; what are their experiences, and how they experienced them. Third, consider the key themes that characterize the phenomenon. Having the responses at hand, the wholistic meaning of the teacher's experiences was sought through the emerging themes. The themes created were rhetorically aligned with the participant's experiences. Fourth, describing the phenomenon in the art of writing and rewriting. Through the writing, the experiences and emotions of the participants were made visible. I made sure that the shared experiences were exhaustively analyzed. Fifth, maintain a strong and focused attention to the phenomenon. On analyzing, I made sure that I am aligned with the research questions to address it. Lastly, balancing the research context by considering the experiences. The discussion focused on teachers who exclusively experienced the phenomenon.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Classroom management is essential to all academic endeavors. a word used by educators to describe the process of making sure that learning takes place in the classroom without being disrupted. It serves as the foundation of a secure and encouraging learning environment. Though, indeed, some teachers are naturally attuned to classroom management techniques, classroom management is a skill that can be learned through training and years of practical experience. It is not a present granted to any teacher. Concerning understanding the essence of teachers' experiences in managing their classes, this study was used to explore those experiences. The experiences of teachers in class management, how they deal with these challenges, and the fruitful experience they gain after surpassing the encounters. Through their experience, teachers have been more prepared to learn life lessons.

Correspondingly, based on the shared experiences of the participants I crafted the three main titles of each theme: A-Mazing Encounters; A Silver Bullet; and Sweet Victory After the Hard Mile. These three are interconnected with one another. It first discusses the challenges faced by the teacher in managing their class, their strategies for combatting those challenges, and the desirable outcome that are evident in the teacher's attitudes and dispositions.

A-Mazing Encounters, are the problematic classroom occurrences experienced by teachers in managing their classes. The challenges encountered by the teachers vary from a simple to a more complicated situation. The behavior of the student is the main factor that hinders the teachers to continue with their lesson and it also consumes their patience. I categorized these behaviors into two themes: Stumble Upon an Ant and Wrestling a Lion. The distinction between these two varies to the severity of the student's misbehaving conduct as experienced by the participants.

The first theme of Stumble upon an Ant is some of the minor disruptive behaviors of the students in the classroom which were experienced by the teachers that impede both learning and teacher's instruction. Based on the responses of the participants, I categorized them into three sub-themes; Silent treatment, which depicts the unconcerned behavior of the students by not participating and uninterested; Rackety Middler presents the teacher's experiences on the interruption and noise done by the students; and



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Lurid Encounter Through Time narrates about the adverse differences of student's behavior then and now. On the other hand, the second theme Wrestling a Lion connotes a more serious aggressive and violent behavior of the students that causes more distress to teachers which also has two sub-themes scorching blood and wildly aggression.

As a result, these classroom predicaments consumed the patience of the teachers. The severity of these occurrences varies for each student. These distract and intimidate in a manner that interferes with normal classroom operations. Despite these problematic situations, a teacher recognized their roles in overcoming these problems, since they considered themselves as the manager in the classroom whose role is to maintain a calm character despite the turbulence, thus the creation of the succeeding themes.

A Silver Bullet serves as a counterpart of these classroom occurrences, teachers develop strategies for combatting the problematic situation in the classroom. These are essential to overcoming the predicament experienced by the teachers because if not, a conducive classroom is impossible to attain. This has three main themes: The Shield for Violence, which portrayed the teaching strategy of controlling the behavior of the students and keeping the drive to exhibit appropriate conduct. This theme has seven sub-themes clocking activities, salutary stratification, setting the line of demarcation, catching the wandering mind, a carrot in a stick, exhibiting the frame of reference, and a bittersweet colloquy. This second theme entitled On the Shoulder of the Soldier, shows the acknowledged responsibility of the teacher as the classroom manager which has two sub-themes flaunting the frame of reference and cradling the injured. However, a teacher's management strategy is not enough it must have the teacher's personality as well. This third theme entitled the Monumental Character discusses the personality of the teacher that they acknowledged as relevant in solving the problem regarding class management. This third theme has four sub-themes: sage mode, wearing the middler boots, lion's heart, and heroic conduct.

The participants perceived these strategies as significant in battling the challenges because they were able to recognize a favorable outcome on them based on their experience. Forthwith, the emergence of the succeeding theme, Reaping the Fruit of Labor.

Reaping the Fruit of Labor has one main theme which is The Sweet Victory After the Hard Mile, this exhibited the productive effect of the strategies introduced as recounted by the participants. These are perceived as a complementary result of the teachers and students after going through an a-mazing encounter. This has also three sub-themes; blissful experience, the tidal wave of happiness, and an exquisite metamorphosis. These three sub-themes portrayed the importance of having an experience. In summary, those experiences brought a positive impact on their lives by gaining new insights, recounting happy moments in managing the class, and their overall development oneself. The participants narrated the gratifying moment of experiencing those predicaments because they believed those were the reason that they were able to understand their learners, it helps them grow into better educators and strengthened their belief that whatever challenges encountered, they were sure to surpass them.

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CONCLUSION

These experiences encountered and shared by teachers can contribute to the body of knowledge in the teaching endeavor. Teachers as classroom managers have always had something to recount when being asked about their experiences with students. Each of the teachers has a unique experience in managing their class considering the individual differences of each student. Though teachers were bombarded with struggles, still the teacher's personality and strategy enabled them to conquer all the challenges encountered. Despite going through positive and negative experiences, teachers recognized the relevance of these experiences as a contributing aspect to their self-development. Though these challenges test their overall capabilities to maintain a positive personality despite being crippled by students' misconduct, still they gained fruitful learning after going through it causing them to have a gratifying feeling. Lastly, it takes a handful of experience and a holistic ability to run a classroom smoothly. Classroom management contributes to the overall success of the students. Hence, an absence of it could mean chaos, where students are holistically underdeveloped.

It was recommended that administrators must provide teachers with pieces of training to continuously update themselves and be aware of recent approaches to managing students in the present generation. Second, teachers should coordinate with the guidance department and other teachers to share common problems met thereby addressing these. Third, teachers and administrators must develop clear guidelines and policies involving student behaviors in class. Fourth, advocate the use of positive discipline. Fifth, administrators should create reward mechanisms for teachers with well-managed classes. Lastly, conduct further research concerning the study.



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